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## **Hong Kong**

### **Market Development Reports**

# **Hong Kong Destroys 100,000 Chickens at a Farm 2002**

Approved by:

**Lloyd S. Harbert**

**U.S. Consulate, Hong Kong**

Prepared by:

Caroline Yuen

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#### **Report Highlights:**

On February 2, the Hong Kong Agriculture, Fisheries, and Conservation Department (AFCD) depopulated a chicken farm after some 10,000 chickens died in the farm in two days. The cause of the unusual mortality at the farm is yet to establish. Government officials assured the public that this is an isolated incident and that the government has taken immediate and appropriate follow-up actions. This incident may serve as ammunition for the government to set up a central slaughtering policy for chickens and to ban the retail sales of live chickens.

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Includes PSD changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Hong Kong [HK1], HK

On February 1 during a routine inspection at a poultry wholesale market, AFCD officials found a batch of sick chickens. The consignment of about 1,500 chickens was then transported from the wholesale market for detention. Some 120 chickens died during detention. AFCD immediately took blood and offal samples from the chickens for testing and destroyed the whole batch of chickens. It was later found out that the chickens came from a local farm. Immediately, the department implemented quarantine measures in the farm and stopped the farm from sending out any chicken. Blood samples were taken from the chickens for testing.

On February 2, the government decided to depopulate all chickens at the farm because some 10,000 chickens died at the farm during the past two days. Being one of the major chicken farms in Hong Kong, the farm in question raised about 100,000 chickens. The slaughter action was completed in two days and AFCD staff have also cleaned and disinfected the farm. Compensation will be offered to the owner at a price of HK\$28 for mature chickens and HK\$18 for chicks. (HK\$7.80 = US\$1.00).

While the cause for the unusual mortality of chickens at this farm is not yet identified, the government assured the public that this is an isolated incident and that it has taken prompt action to contain the spread of disease. The AFCD announced that they have inspected nearby chicken farms and have contacted owners of other poultry farms. There has been no unusual mortality in any of these farms. However, about 700 of the infected chickens had been released to the market before the slaughter operation. On February 3, some 30 chickens at a retail stall were found dead. The stall obtained supplies from the chicken farm in question. As a preventive measure, the stall owner agreed to destroy all the remaining 300 chickens in the stall and to suspend business for 24 hours to facilitate thorough cleansing and disinfection of his stall.

Following two bird flu incidents in 1998 and 2000 respectively, consumers do not seem to be overreacting to the latest slaughter action. The Chinese New Year is about 10 days away and this is a typical peak season for chicken consumption. Retailers and trade representatives interviewed by the media indicated that retail sales have not been affected at all and they predicted that prices may increase 10% to 15% in the coming week because of expected increased demand during the Chinese New Year.

Meanwhile, the government pledged to step up cleansing and disinfection of the wholesale market and retail stalls, and surveillance of all chicken farms.

This incident has not yet had any significant impact on retail sales of poultry products. However, it may serve as ammunition for the government to set up a central slaughtering policy for chickens and to ban the retail sales of live chickens. During the first and second bird flu crisis, some experts argued that the central slaughtering of chickens is the most effective way of prohibiting bird flu from infecting humans. (Six people died in 1997 during the first bird flu crisis.)